

## THE UNIVERSAL TROPHY IS ARTHRITIS

most of my life i competed in athletics,  
from softball leagues  
on through high school and college  
into years of weightlifting, faculty basketball,  
backyard boxing, and barroom armwrestling.  
even when i cut it all back to jogging,  
there were always voices inside or out  
telling me i ought to be going  
a little farther or a little faster.  
now i try to keep afloat on the ocean  
about twenty minutes  
a couple of times a week.  
the only challenge  
is trying not to drown.  
if any of my kids wants to compete at anything,  
that's fine. and they can be sure  
they won't be competing with me.  
i just hope they learn sooner than i did  
that the least important way of proving yourself  
is athletic.

## A DEAR GERALD NOTE

i awake today to a note from my wife:  
"i'll be taking the kids to my mother's  
after work today  
to celebrate valentine's day."

it is february 17.  
valentine's day was 3 days ago.  
we've been celebrating valentine's day  
for about ten days. i tried to keep up  
with the celebration,  
but i dropped out about february 13.

today, february 17, is not valentine's day,  
but it is my birthday.

no matter.  
my wife will remember within a week  
and rush me something i like  
from the liquor store.  
and, in the meantime, not all the money  
in the world could purchase a gift  
as exquisite as this finely nurtured hurt.